



# **Massachusetts National Guard**

**Public Affairs**

**50 Maple Street, Milford, MA 01757**

## **News Release**

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### **Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Goes Into Effect**

**MILFORD – Mass.** – “The military will not come to a screeching halt,” said Lt. Col. Scott Zuffanti, chief, Soldier Services Division, Massachusetts National Guard, “I see this as another evolution in the ever widening diversity in the military.”

The evolution Zuffanti is referring to is the repeal, effective today, of the military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy. The policy, enacted in 1993, allowed for homosexual Servicemembers to serve as long as they did not disclose or act upon their sexual preferences. Servicemembers, including recruiters, were not allowed to ask if another Servicemember was a homosexual. If a Servicemember was discovered to be homosexual or engaged in any homosexual conduct, then they were discharged from the military.

All that ended today. So what has changed?

Beginning today, homosexual military members are allowed to serve openly without fear of being discharged based on their sexual orientation.

“We do not anticipate any change in the readiness, the esprit de corps or the relationships among Soldiers and Airmen as a result of this repeal,” said Col. Francis B. Magurn, Chief of the Joint Staff, Massachusetts National Guard.

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While the majority of Soldiers and Airmen have probably served with a homosexual Servicemember, there may be some who may have, "adverse feelings" if a fellow Servicemember "comes out of the closet."

"You don't have to like the person, you have to respect them. You have to work with them, you have to be civil during duty hours," said Zuffanti, "You don't need to be drinking buddies, but on duty you are professional."

There may be some Servicemembers who feel that the repeal of DADT has created an environment where they can no longer serve.

"Soldiers and Airmen cannot request to be moved, they can't request to shorten their enlistments based on the sexual orientation of another Servicemember," said Lt. Col. Elizabeth McLaughlin, Deputy Judge Advocate General, Massachusetts National Guard.

Servicemembers need to remember that (if enlisted) they signed a binding contract. If their contract is due to expire, then that is the time to decide if they are going to stay in a post DADT military. If a Servicemember who is a commissioned officer (and has completed their service obligation) feels that the repeal of DADT makes it impossible to continue to serve, they have the right to resign their commissions.

Here are some things that haven't changed.

Benefits:

While some states allow same sex marriages or civil unions, same sex marriages or civil unions are still not recognized by military. In 1996, Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Law, defining marriage as being between one man and one woman. Until the law is changed or revoked, a same sex



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spouse is not recognized as a dependent. Therefore all the benefits a heterosexual couple has, a homosexual couple does not.

There are still some cases where a Servicemember can designate their benefits to a same sex spouse/partner; the Thrift Savings Fund and Servicemembers Group Life Insurance are a few of the instances.

Public displays of affection:

Due to current standards of conduct, public displays of affection are prohibited while in uniform or while wearing civilian clothing on duty. This applies to all couples, regardless of marital state or sexual orientation.

There are exceptions to this policy; weddings, graduations, promotions, send off and homecoming ceremonies and the like. In these cases modest displays are allowed.

Sexual Harassment;

It does not matter if the harassment is coming from a member of the same or opposite sex; sexual harassment is still sexual harassment and will not be tolerated.

"The bottom line evaluation has nothing to do with sexual orientation," said McLaughlin, "it's about what is appropriate and what is not."

In the end, the repealing of DADT should not change the way Servicemembers interact with each other.

"Soldiers and Airmen treating each other with dignity and respect is still the common gold standard for behavior among them," said Magurn.